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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [PHUM](#) [KWMN](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: FIGHTING FLARES UP IN WESTERN EQUATORIA AND LAKES

REF: KHARTOUM 482

Classified By: P/E Chief Eric Whitaker, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Jonglei State and the greater Upper Nile region remain the source of the greatest ethnic instability in Southern Sudan. Recent clashes in Western Equatoria and Lakes states, however, show that this fighting may spread if the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) cannot maintain security within its borders. Fighting in both Western Equatoria and Lakes has been attributed to Dinka youth who act with impunity, show no respect for traditions, and may be using rape as a weapon. Several NGOs and government officials also say that the situation is made worse in Western Equatoria by the actions of the governor, while Lakes state is plagued by a corrupt judicial system that threatens the rule of law.

Ethnic Fears Manipulated in Western Equatoria

12. (U) Tensions and periodic fighting have existed for generations between the agriculturalist groups in Western Equatoria and the Dinka cattle herders who use the region for dry season grazing. However, violence has been traditionally controlled and was historically not considered a threat to the overall peace and stability of Equatoria. The situation became worse during the war with the more permanent arrival of Dinka internally displaced persons (IDPs), who often claimed land vacated by fleeing refugees. These refugees have been returning, while the Dinka IDPs were initially slow to move back to their homes. This further elevated tensions, especially because the settlement of land disputes is normally handled by a local chief, a mechanism that is less effective when the dispute involves people from different ethnicities.

13. (C) However, the GoSS had been claiming that these issues were manageable and would not cause widespread instability. Now, according to Peter Beshir Bendi, SPLM Member of Parliament from Western Equatoria, the situation has deteriorated and threatens the peace. Bendi blamed this on the governor of Western Equatoria, Patrick Zamoi. A representative of PACT, a largely USAID-funded NGO that has been organizing peace conferences throughout Southern Sudan, also said that the situation in Western Equatoria was manageable until Zamoi arrived and began inflaming racial tensions and agitating for violence.

14. (C) Bendi told the Acting Consul General (A/CG) that he believes Zamoi is working with the northerners to destabilize Southern Sudan, and that a change will soon be made in that state. Bendi is a possible replacement for governor. He told A/CG that he would take the job if asked, but he thinks he can be more useful if he stays in Juba and continues to work in the assembly.

¶15. (C) In neighboring Lakes state, NGO workers, SPLM members, and GoSS officials independently told A/CG that groups of armed Dinka youth are creating inter-clan fighting through cattle raiding and general banditry. The same youths are also thought to be responsible for the attacks on the Jur in Mvolo, on the border between Lakes and Western Equatoria. These attacks have reportedly left 20 dead and have included charges of rape.

¶16. (C) GoSS Minister for Culture, Youth, and Sports John Luk Jok, who has been accompanying GoSS Vice President Riek Machar on his many peace missions, said that the reports of rape are plausible, although he had no solid figures. He explained that rape is considered very taboo in traditional Dinka culture, but these youth have no respect for any of their cultural traditions. This also makes them hard to control because they do not listen to their elders or respond to traditional peacemaking techniques. He lamented that despite the fact that these kids are operating outside the control of their clan, it is the clan that suffers the retaliation.

¶17. (C) Deng Ajak, Director General of the SPLM think-tank the Kush Institute, and Member of Parliament Gatkouth Kuich separately echoed Jok's assesment. Jok, Ajak and Kuich also said that the problems with impudent youth were widespread throughout the south, and these young fighters were responsible for the Jonglei fighting last February (reftel). Ajak blames the SPLM, whose indoctrination included distancing recruits from their heritage and value systems, teaching them to "kill your own father if necessary."

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Rule of Law Breakdown

¶18. (C) The situation is further compounded in Lakes state by the breakdown in the traditional judicial system. Both Ajak and Jok explained that there is widespread corruption among the chiefs who run the customary court systems, and that justice can be traded for cows. Because of the lack of faith in these customary structures, even more traditional Dinka are reportedly taking the law into their own hands, including recent reports of a Lakes state minister being attacked by an angry mob.

¶19. (C) Ajak, Jok, Kuich and others believe that this problem will only get worse until the SPLA is capable of enforcing order. While the SPLA has an effective core fighting force (largely assigned to the Joint Integrated Units or JIUs), most SPLA troops are ill-equipped to deal with these young bandits. When the SPLA tried to disarm similar groups in Jonglei last February, they were routed and are now reluctant to engage any raiding youths.
STEINFELD